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SUBJECT: POLICE ASSUME CONTROL OF RALITO; PARAMILITARY
BLOC'S SECURITY RING DEMOBILIZES

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Wood for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

SUMMARY

11. (C) Emboffs attended demobilization in Santa Fe de Ralito on August 25-26 and witnessed Colombian police taking over from some 300 demobilized paramilitaries, who has been the "security force" there. The police presence remains thin but should expand in the coming weeks. There were two principal changes in the latest demobilization: prosecutors did not conduct open statements or "version libre" on the spot for the 782 pardon (a good thing.); and military identification cards were not issued. GOC representatives said the recent changes responded to NGO's and international community concerns and in part were made to save money. End Summary.

DEMOBILIZATION RESULTS

12. (U) Emboffs traveled to Santa Fe de Ralito on August 25 to witness the demobilization of three hundred combatants who served as AUC security forces for the special negotiation zone (zona de negociacion): 208 members of the AUC's Pacific Bloc, 62 members of the Vanguishers of Arauca Bloc, 18 members of the Centauros Bloc, and 12 of the Liberators of the South Bloc. As of August 27, the total number of paramilitaries demobilized collectively has reached 9,246. The Pacific and Vanguishers of Arauca blocs' commanders also demobilized: Francisco Javier Zuluaga Lindo, ("Gordo Lindo") and Miguel Angel Melchor Mejia Munera, alias ("El Mellizo" or "Pablo Arauca").

POLICE FORCES TAKE OVER AREA

13. (C) After one year of paramilitary control over the zone, police took over all law enforcement functions after August 127. Although Emboffs observed a limited police presence during the demobilization (approximately 15-20), GOC officials said they planed to add 40 more police in the coming weeks. One representative from the High Commissioner for Peace's office noted that the closing of the zone -- slated for December 31 -- would be gradual. Former combatants will remain in the zone until Justice and Peace law mechanisms are established.

POSTPONING 'VERSION LIBRE' AND OTHER PROCESSES

14. (C) GOC officials outlined several changes they had made to the demobilization process in response to criticism from civil society, NGOs, and the international community. GOC reforms also attempt to reduce costs. In particular, the GOC decided to postpone "version libre" of the former combatants who qualify for 782 treatment and instead have the Prosecutor General's Office (Fiscalia) conduct them in the Reference and Orientation Center (CRO). In meetings with CRO staff, they agreed that such a move would be welcomed by the demobilized since it could lead to more confidential confessions and they are likely to feel more secure at the CRO (the Embassy had urged this change.) Military identification cards, which exempt adult males from military service, were not issued on site -- although demobilization IDs were issued as usual.

VISITS TO MONTERIA

15. (U) The CRO in Monteria is responsible for informing, registering, tracking and monitoring demobilized combatants in the Departments of Cordoba and Sucre. It serves approximately 1,800 former combatants, making it the largest such center. The center is able to carry out its mandate successfully since the area has traditionally been a paramilitary stronghold. Other CROs, located in areas with more guerrilla presence, including Medellin, Cali, Cucuta, Turbo, and Sincelejo have faced some reluctance from

demobilized fighters. CRO staff claimed it initially had been difficult to gain the confidence of demobilized paramilitaries, but former combatants appeared to be growing increasingly comfortable with the CRO and visited the center frequently. The CRO staff said that the demobilized would be less likely to go to a judicial center instead of a CRO to meet with a prosecutor to submit their "version libre."

16. (U) On August 26, Emboffs attended a workshop on post-demobilization reintegration led by the Galan Corporation. Galan spearheads efforts to promote civic involvement from community leaders and demobilized paramilitaries to facilitate reintegration. Over 100 participants returned to a second module to discuss ways to improve the reinsertion process and create programs that may assist in regaining the acceptance of their local communities.

WOOD